

Swiss Chard

“Though snails are exceedingly slow, there’s one thing I’d like to know. If I out run ‘em round the yard, how come they beat me to the chard?” — Allen Klein

Benefits and nutritional information:

- Swiss chard is considered a “superfood,” and has been described as “one of the most nutrient-dense crops in the garden.”
- Chard contains an impressive list of vitamins, minerals and organic compounds to include antioxidants and beneficial enzymes.



Starting:

- Chard is generally started from seeds, sown 1/2” to 1” deep and spaced 2 to 6 inches apart in rows 18” apart.
- To speed germination, seeds may be soaked in water for 24 hours prior to planting

When to plant:

- For the spring season, chard seeds can be planted 2 to 3 weeks before the last spring frost date.
- Chard can be planted throughout the season up until about 40 days prior to the first fall frost date. Later plantings can provide harvestable crops throughout the winter with minimal protection in most years.

Thinning, training

- When plants reach 3” tall they may be thinned to between 6 and 12 inches apart, depending on what size plants/leaves you prefer.

Signs of over-watering, nutrient deficiency

- Normal chard leaves are a dark, leafy green. Older leaves that turn yellow and curl toward the bottom may simply be from the plant shedding its older growth; however
- When younger leaves yellow or whiten in the middle it could indicate a major nutrient deficiency. It’s important to remember that overly wet soil can prevent proper uptake of nutrients, and therefore be a false indicator of nutrient-deficient soil.

Pests and pest controls

- As the quotation at the beginning of the page suggests, [slugs](#) can be a major problem with chard.

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- **Leaf miner**, which appears as skeletonized patches in leaves, is the chief pest in established plants.
- **Aphids** may also become established on chard leaves. Check the underside of leaves to detect them early.
- **Cercospora Leaf Spot** is a fungal disease is recognized by brownish-grey or black spots with reddish-purple halos.
- **Flea beetles** may also attack chard. This will be evidenced by a pattern of shotgun pellet-like holes in the leaves.

Harvesting

- Chard is best treated as a “cut-and-come-again” crop. This technique involves only taking a few older leaves at a time from each plant and allowing younger leaves to continue growing for additional harvests later in the season.